ANA Lauds Supreme Court Decision Upholding Health Care Reform Law

SILVER SPRING, MD – The American Nurses Association (ANA) lauds the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision today to uphold the Affordable Care Act (ACA), including the “minimum coverage provision,” hailing it as a victory for all patients and their families. This is particularly true for those 50 million adults and children who currently lack adequate health coverage. ANA praises the law’s consumer protections and the opportunity it opens for registered nurses (RNs) to assume an even greater role in providing high-quality, cost-effective care.

“This decision means that millions of people will have access to the basic health care and preventive services that they’ve lacked,” said ANA President Karen A. Daley, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN. “Instead of getting sicker and developing serious and costly complications because they can’t afford to manage their health conditions, people will get the care they need to recognize problems earlier or avoid them altogether. There will be savings throughout the system.

“Registered nurses are well-positioned to lead in providing essential prevention and wellness services and care coordination for individuals and families,” Daley added. “The law enhances opportunities for nurse practitioners and nurse midwives to provide primary care. This will increase accessibility for the growing number of people needing basic health services.”

ANA has been a steadfast supporter of the 2010 health care reform law and its provisions to expand access to health care; protect consumers; improve the quality of care; emphasize primary care, care coordination, disease management, and prevention; increase community-based care; and utilize nurses to their fullest capabilities, as leaders and essential members of multidisciplinary health care teams.

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Alarmed by the growing numbers of uninsured individuals and families, rising costs, and quality of care concerns, ANA has advocated for health care reform since 1991’s Nursing’s Agenda for Health Care Reform, most recently updated in 2008. As guiding principles, ANA contends that health care is a basic human right, and that all deserve access to essential health care services.

In January, ANA joined other health care groups in filing an *amicus* brief with the Supreme Court supporting the ACA’s minimum coverage provision, or “individual mandate,” that requires nearly all Americans to carry health insurance or pay a tax penalty. ANA contends that the provision is needed to spread risks and costs fairly and reduce uncompensated care expenses.

ANA also views the decision as a win for all consumers due to the law’s protections against certain insurance industry practices, such as denying coverage because of pre-existing health conditions and imposing annual or lifetime coverage caps.

For RNs, the ACA creates more opportunities to lead or participate in innovative, team-based care delivery models, such as accountable care organizations and medical homes, with incentives for nurses’ expertise in care coordination. The law also provides funding to expand nurse-managed health centers and for nursing education and workforce development.

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*ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent and state nurses associations and its organizational affiliates. ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.*